



Carlsbad **ReadsTogether**

A Community Reading Project

Resource Guide

A Message From the Mayor

“Carlsbad Reads Together”

is a community-wide reading program presented by Carlsbad City Library and sponsored by the Friends of the Carlsbad Library. The program, patterned after successful community-wide reading programs across the country, encourages community dialogue and fosters a love of reading. The book chosen for Carlsbad Reads Together 2009 is Firoozeh Dumas' bestseller *Funny in Farsi*. I invite everyone who lives in, works in or visits Carlsbad to participate by reading and discussing the book and attending one or several of the Library's events.

Look forward to seeing you at the Library,

Claude A. “Bud” Lewis

**About *Funny in Farsi*:
A Memoir of Growing Up Iranian in America**

“When I was seven, my parents, my fourteen-year-old brother, Farshid, and I moved from Abadan, Iran, to Whittier, California. ... After spending an entire day in America, surrounded by Americans, I realized that my father’s description of America had been correct. The bathrooms were clean and the people were very, very kind.”

And so begins and ends the first chapter of *Funny in Farsi: A Memoir of Growing Up Iranian in America*, Firoozeh Dumas’ lighthearted chronicle of her family’s transition from Iran to life in Southern California.

Central to her story is her family—her engineer father, Kazem, who loves Las Vegas and Disneyland and tries to win a fortune on “Bowling for Dollars”; and her mother, Nazireh, who tries to learn English by watching American game shows but is not fully successful.

Firoozeh herself attends school, plays with Barbie dolls, goes to summer camp, learns to swim and eventually meets and marries a young immigrant from France, adding another layer to her multicultural family. *Funny in Farsi* is a warm, witty and touching look at cross-cultural adjustment and family life.

Firoozeh Dumas Biography

Firoozeh Dumas was born in Abadan, Iran, and, in the 1970s, moved to Southern California with her family. She later attended UC Berkeley, where she met and married a Frenchman.

Firoozeh grew up listening to her father, a former Fulbright Scholar, recount the many colorful stories of his life in both Iran and America. In 2001, with no prior writing experience, Firoozeh decided to write her stories as a gift for her two children. *Funny in Farsi* was on the *San Francisco Chronicle* and *Los Angeles Times* bestseller lists and was a finalist for the PEN/USA award in 2004 and a finalist in 2005 for an Audie Award for best audio book (she lost to Bob Dylan). She was also a finalist for the prestigious Thurber Prize for American Humor (she lost to Jon Stewart) and is the first Middle Eastern woman ever to be considered for this honor.

Firoozeh's commentaries have been broadcast on NPR and published in the *Los Angeles Times*, *The New York Times*, *San Francisco Chronicle Magazine* and *Lifetime Magazine*.

In April 2005, Firoozeh's one-woman show, *Laughing Without an Accent*, opened in Northern California to sold-out audiences and ran at Theatreworks in Mountain View, California in 2006.

Firoozeh Dumas Biography continued

For the past five years, Firoozeh has traveled the country, reminding us that our commonalities far outweigh our differences ... and doing so with humor. She has spoken at conferences, schools, churches, Jewish temples and Islamic centers. Her travels have taken her from the East Coast to the West Coast, from Harvard to UCLA. Everywhere she has gone, audiences have embraced her message of shared humanity and invited her back for more.

Firoozeh Dumas's latest memoir, entitled *Laughing without an Accent*, was published in May 2008.

A Note From Firoozeh Dumas:

"First of all, let me say how excited I am about Carlsbad Reads Together 2009. I absolutely love these community reads programs and the way the community comes together in ways that normally does not happen. I've noticed that other programs that have used *Funny in Farsi* have attracted tweens, teens, their parents and *their* parents, college students, well-traveled Americans, people who have never left this country, immigrants from every corner, people who love to laugh and those who just come for the free baklava. Whatever the draw, a good time is guaranteed and you will learn something. I promise. So grab your book and start reading!"

Also by Firoozeh Dumas

Laughing Without an Accent: Adventures of an Iranian American, at Home and Abroad. Villard, 2008.

Biographies and Memoirs of Iranians and Iranian Americans

The Ayatollah Begs to Differ: The Paradox of Modern Iran by Hooman Majd. Doubleday, 2008.

Daughter of Persia: A Woman's Journey From Her Father's Harem Through the Islamic Revolution by Sattareh Farman- Farmaian. Crown, 1992.

Even After All This Time: A Story of Love, Revolution, and Leaving Iran by Afschineh Latifi. Regan Books, 2005.

Iran Awakening: A Memoir of Revolution and Hope by Shirin Ebadi. Random House, 2006.

An Iranian Odyssey by Gohar Kordi. Serpent's Tail, 1991.

Journey From the Land of No: A Girlhood Caught in Revolutionary Iran by Roya Hakakian. Crown, 2004.

Lipstick Jihad: A Memoir of Growing Up Iranian in America and American in Iran by Azadeh Moaveni. Public Affairs, 2005.

Persepolis and *Persepolis 2* by Marjane Satrapi. Pantheon Books, 2003 and 2004.

Persian Girls: A Memoir by Nahid Rachlin. Peremy P. Tarcher/Penguin, 2006.

Reading Lolita in Tehran: A Memoir in Books by Azar Nafisi. Random House, 2003.

Things I've Been Silent About by Azar Nafisi. Random House, 2008

Saffron Sky: A Life Between Iran and America by Gelareh Asayesh. Beacon Press, 1999.

Memoirs by Immigrants to the United States

Crossing Over: A Mexican Family on the Migrant Trail
by Rubén Martínez. Metropolitan Books, 2001.

The Dream: A Memoir by Harry Bernstein.
Ballantine Books, 2008.

Golden Bones: An Extraordinary Journey From Hell in Cambodia to a New Life in America by Sichan Siv. Harper, 2008.

Kaffir Boy in America: An Encounter with Apartheid
by Mark Mathabane. Scribners, 1989.

The Latehomecomer: A Hmong Family Memoir by Kao Kalia Yang.
Coffee House Press, 2008.

Lost in Translation: A Life in a New Language by Eva Hoffman.
E.P. Dutton, 1989.

No Words to Say Goodbye: A Young Jewish Woman's Journey From the Soviet Union Into America – the Extraordinary Diaries of Raimonda Kopelnitsky by Raimonda Kopelnitsky. Hyperion, 1994.

Carlsbad Reads Together Events

All events are free and open to the public on a first-come, first-served basis. For additional event information, please visit www.carlsbadlibrary.org or call (760) 602-2026.

Discussion Groups for *Funny in Farsi*

Read *Funny in Farsi* and then join other community members for a lively discussion about the book.

Carlsbad City Library on Dove Lane

1775 Dove Lane, Gowland Meeting Room

Wednesday, April 1 at 2 p.m.

Thursday, April 2 at 7 p.m.

Monday, April 27 at 7 p.m.

Georgina Cole Library

1250 Carlsbad Village Drive

Tuesday, April 7 at 7 p.m.

Thursday, April 9 at 2 p.m.

Carlsbad City Library Learning Center

3368 Eureka Place

Tuesday, April 21 at 6 p.m.

The Library Learning Center will host a Spanish-language book discussion for *How the García Girls Lost Their Accents/De Cómo las muchachas García perdieron el acento*, by Julia Alvarez, about a family from the Dominican Republic adjusting to life in America. For more information, call (760) 931-4500.

Carlsbad Reads Together Events

A Visit from Firoozeh Dumas

A highlight of the program will be an appearance by *Funny in Farsi* author Firoozeh Dumas. She will discuss her work and sign copies of her books. Books will be available for purchase.

Thursday, April 23

3 p.m. at Georgina Cole Library.

8 p.m. at Carlsbad City Library's Ruby G. Schulman Auditorium.

Free tickets, limit two per person, will be given out beginning an hour before each talk.

An Evening of Persian Music and Dance

Saturday, April 18 at 7 p.m.

Schulman Auditorium, 1775 Dove Lane

Enjoy live traditional Persian music and a performance by the Iranian School of San Diego's Dance Group. Seating is limited. Free tickets will be given out beginning an hour before the performance.

Additional Carlsbad Reads Together Events

Additional Carlsbad Reads Together events include a discussion about early immigrants to Carlsbad, presented by the Library's Carlsbad History Room staff, and a memoir writing workshop. Check www.carlsbadlibrary.org for dates and times.

Special workshop:

North San Diego County Genealogical Society Spring Seminar

Where Did I Come From and How Did I Get Here?

Learn about immigrant research resources.

Saturday, March 28 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Carlsbad Senior Center, 799 Pine Street

Registration is required; workshop fee is \$25-30.

For more information, call the Library's Genealogy Desk at (760) 434-2931.

More Carlsbad Reads Together Events

Carlsbad Reads Together Movies: The American Immigrant Experience

All films begin at 6 p.m. each Wednesday in April. Please note that locations vary. Admission is free.

April 1: Entertaining video of talks by previous Carlsbad Reads Together authors: T.C. Boyle (6 p.m.), Ray Bradbury (7 p.m.) and Alexander McCall Smith (8 p.m.). Georgina Cole Library

April 8: *Tortilla Soup* (2001, Rated PG-13, 102 minutes)
Library Learning Center

April 15: *The Namesake* (2007, Rated PG-13, 128 minutes)
Schulman Auditorium, Carlsbad City Library

April 22: *The White Balloon* (1996, Not Rated, 86 minutes)
Schulman Auditorium, Carlsbad City Library

April 29: *In America* (2002, Rated PG-13, 105 minutes)
Schulman Auditorium, Carlsbad City Library

And on Saturday, May 2 at 2 p.m., join us for a screening of *Persepolis* (2008, Rated PG-13, 95 minutes), based on the graphic novel by Marjane Satrapi, at the Library's Schulman Auditorium.

Iranian History and Culture

The Art and Architecture of Persia by Giovanni Curatola.
Abbeville Press, 2007.

Gardens of Persia by Penelope Hobhouse. Kales Press, 2004.

A History of Iran: Empire of the Mind by Michael Axworthy.
Basic Books, 2008.

Persian Architecture: The Triumph of Form and Color
by Arthur Upham Pope. G. Braziller, 1965.

Strange Times, My Dear: The PEN Anthology of Contemporary Iranian Literature. Arcade Publishing, 2005.

A Taste of Persia: An Introduction to Persian Cooking
by Najmieh Batmanglij. Mage, 1999.

Fiction About Iran, Iranians and Iranian Americans

The Blood of Flowers: A Novel by Anita Amirrezvani.
Little, Brown & Co., 2007.

Caspian Rain: A Novel by Gina Barkhordar Nahai.
MacAdam Cage, 2007.

Digging to America by Anne Tyler. Alfred A Knopf, 2006.

Embroideries by Marjane Satrapi. Pantheon Books, 2005.

The Fortune Catcher by Susanne Pari. Warner Books, 1997.

House of Sand and Fog by Andre Dubus III. W.W. Norton, 1999.

In the Walled Gardens: A Novel by Anahita Firouz.
Little, Brown & Co., 2002.

A Persian Requiem by Simin Daneshvar. G. Braziller, 1992.

Pomegranate Soup: A Novel by Marsha Mehran.
Random House, 2005.

The Rug Merchant by Meg Mullins. Viking, 2006.

The Saffron Kitchen by Yasmin Crowther. Viking, 2006.

The September of Shiraz by Dalia Sofer.
Ecco/Harper Collins, 2007.

Veil of Roses by Laura Fitzgerald. Bantam Books, 2007.

Memoirs of Growing Up in America

Blue Skies, No Fences: A Memoir of Childhood and Family
by Lynne V. Cheney. Threshold Editions, 2007.

Dark at the Roots: A Memoir by Sarah Thyre. Counterpoint, 2007.

The Discomfort Zone: A Personal History by Jonathan Franzen.
Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2006.

A Girl Named Zippy: Growing Up Small in Mooreland, Indiana
by Haven Kimmel. Broadway Books, 2002.

The Glass Castle: A Memoir by Jeannette Walls. Scribner, 2005.

Hapa Girl: A Memoir by May-Lee Chai.
Temple University Press, 2007.

Kitchen Privileges: A Memoir by Mary Higgins Clark.
Simon & Schuster, 2002.

The Life and Times of the Thunderbolt Kid by Bill Bryson.
Broadway Books, 2006.

Light Years: A Girlhood in Hawai'i by Susanna Moore.
Grove Press, 2007.

A Long Way From Home: Growing Up in the American Heartland
by Tom Brokaw. Random House, 2002.

The Longest Trip Home: A Memoir by John Grogan.
William Morrow, 2008.

Never Have Your Dog Stuffed: And Other Things I've Learned
by Alan Alda. Random House, 2005.

Running with Scissors: A Memoir by Augusten Burroughs.
St. Martin's Press, 2002.

Shopping for Porcupine: A Life in Arctic Alaska by Seth Kantner.
Milkweed Editions, 2008.

***Funny in Farsi* Discussion Questions**

1. *Funny in Farsi* consists of 27 chapters, each addressing a different story or theme. Which chapter stands out for you and why?
2. Dumas' family first moved to the United States in the early 1970s and at that time, she says, Americans did not know much about Iran. Do you think, as a country, we know more about Iran today? How much of our knowledge about the country is colored by recent news reports and the "War on Terror"?
3. What did you learn about life in Iran and Iranian culture from reading *Funny in Farsi*? How does it differ from life here in the United States?
4. Dumas talks about the generosity and warmth displayed by the people of Whittier toward her family when they first arrived. Do you think that immigrants from Iran—and other countries—receive the same warm welcome today?
5. Dumas encountered problems as a result of her unusual name and as a girl adopted the American name "Julie." Do you think that today she would encounter the same problems?
6. Dumas has said that since the publication of *Funny in Farsi* people keep asking how her family has reacted to the book. If you were to write a memoir of your childhood and family, how would your family react? Would they be pleased by what you had to say?
7. Did you enjoy the book and find it funny? What did you like best about it? If you didn't enjoy the book, why not?



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